FIFA Rules

How the World Cup is Changing Football Culture in Brazil

By Bernardo Buarque de Hollanda and Jimmy Medeiros

Brazil is known around the world as a footballing nation. The Brazilian style of play is universally characterized, to the point of stereotyping, as virtuous, creative, simply amazing. Even Brazilians who have no interest in football whatsoever are compelled to talk about the sport when they go to social gatherings, travel abroad, or host foreign visitors. International broadcasts of tournaments such as the World Cup, organized by the Swiss-based Fédération Internationale de Football Association, or FIFA, have helped globalize the sport; in turn, given Brazil's prowess in the game—it has won five FIFA World Cup trophies—this has made Brazilians and their country well known among the community of nations.

Football's worldwide scale and influence has thus contributed to the rise of Brazil's international stature. In 1958, when Brazil won its first world title in Sweden, television only partially covered the games. But by 1970, when Brazil won its third title in Mexico, international broadcasts were fully established. Since then, the FIFA tournament has progressively expanded, and today, is avidly watched by enthusiasts on five continents. Sports tourism now sends thousands of fans descending on the host country and hundreds of millions more tuning into live broadcasts.

It is certainly no longer a pastime primarily followed in Europe and South America. Up until 1978, only sixteen national teams participated in the finals of the World Cup; by 1982, the number had grown to twenty-four countries; and, since 1998, the finals have been expanded to include thirty-two teams. In 2002, when Brazil won the tournament for the fifth time, a third of the planet, more than two billion people, stopped to watch the final match between Brazil and Germany. FIFA has further spread the game by diversifying the selection of World Cup venues; in 2022, for example, the finals will be held in the Middle East for the first time, in the tiny country of Qatar.

◁ Maracanã stadium, Rio de Janeiro, April 11, 2013. *Felipe Dana/AP/Corbis*

Football is an indelible feature of the Brazil brand. Footballing prestige and tradition has contributed to democratic stability and economic growth—in recent years, Brazil has gone from being an "underdeveloped" nation to an "emerging" one, and has become a member of leading international blocs such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). And there is little doubt that Brazil's footballing tradition played a part in FIFA's choice of the country to host a World Cup for the second time, and making Brazil the venue for this year's tournament.

For all the glory that a sporting mega-event is meant to bring the host nation, the reality is that the World Cup has its costs, too. The street protests that erupted throughout Brazil in June 2013 expressed scathing social discontent with government spending on World Cup infrastructure—partly due to FIFA's stringent requirements—at the expense of funding for necessities such as education and health care. FIFA rules mandating the modernization of arenas, as well as related upgrades of transportation and security infrastructure, have also prompted an important debate among Brazilians about the World Cup's impact on the country's football tradition and fan culture. FIFA's requirements are intended to leave a positive legacy following the tournament, by driving the host country's social commitment towards its population. But in Brazil, such an outcome is in question.

Brazilians are divided in their opinions concerning "traditionalism" versus "modernity" inside the stadiums. Not surprisingly, many Brazilians are angry that modernization has entailed a rise in ticket prices for attending football matches—a blow to the tradition of Brazilian football's association with the working class. Inside the stadium, Brazilian fan culture has further been affected by FIFA's requirement for multi-use arenas constructed on an international standard. The new and refurbished stadiums, for example, are fitted with customized, individual seats. This marginalizes fans who make up a significant portion of football audiences, linked to their respective clubs, who prefer to watch games standing on their feet—a practice that enables them to experience the thrill of the match and heighten their at times choreographed support of the team as part of an energized throng. FIFA's requirements essentially involve a radical modification of the paying audience's social physiognomy and, consequently, the dynamic of the sport as enjoyed by many Brazilians. The requirements may make sense for a World Cup, but they are not conducive to continuous year-round play for the enjoyment of club football fans.

Magic of the Maracanã

The formation of a sporting sector does not only depend on, as suggested by the late French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, the process of empowering its three social actors: the professionals, being mainly the athletes; the experts, such as the press; and the

amateurs, the spectators and sports fans in general. In Brazil another critical factor for the autonomy of modern sport in the second half of the nineteenth century was the creation of particular spaces for the running and support of competitions.

As the popularity of football grew in Brazil, in the early decades of the twentieth century, the makeshift outdoor fields and vacant land, so important for giving birth to talented players, gave way to the construction of stadiums. These were mostly built in a circular way, designed to host official competitions on several levels: local, national, and international. Fans then paid admission fees to watch the matches.

In Brazil, stadiums have a public and private tradition. They were built by the government and not, as in some countries, privately by local clubs. At the same time, typical spectators are followers of club football, and are interested in the national and regional championships in which their teams participate. Despite the fame of the Brazilian national team, it increasingly schedules its matches overseas; that is more financially attractive for the CBF—Confederação Brasileira de Futebol (Brazilian Soccer Federation)—and sponsoring companies.

Club football fueled the popularity of the sport in cities such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, but it was the Brazilian national team, after 1910, that helped articulate the sense of national identity and made football a personification of Brazil. Following friendly matches against neighboring nations, the CBD—Confederação Brasileira de Desportos (Brazilian Sports Confederation)—was created in 1914 as a private entity with power to influence government, its role was to organize regular competitions with other nations.

Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay played in one of the first such tournaments of that decade, the South American Championship. Rio de Janeiro, then the capital of the Brazilian Republic, hosted the third edition of the championship in 1919. The event was hosted by the Fluminense Football Club, the first club in Brazil, which opened in 1902 and had football as its core activity. The Fluminense stadium was upgraded for the tournament, and expanded to accommodate up to twenty thousand spectators in two types of stands: the grandstand, an area with seating; and general admission, where fans watched the matches while standing on their feet.

Admission policy also distinguished between club members and non-members. Tickets for the standing general admission area, for example, were cheaper. Club membership was a mark of the elite in the early twentieth century, a time when football was an amateur sport played by the sons of Rio de Janeiro's bourgeoisie and aristocracy. Photographs from the period illustrate the social refinement of club members. Brazil went on to win the 1919 South American Championship, its first continental trophy, by defeating Uruguay in the second half of extra time. Frenzied crowds poured through the center and southern districts of Rio following the match.

The culture of Brazilian football began to change in the 1930s, as the sport became professional and increasingly played by athletes from the country's lower social classes. The expanding number of large stadiums further popularized the sport, and it became more associated with the growing working class that thronged in major cities of the southeastern region of Brazil. The state became involved in regulating competitions, by creating a federal sports law and constructing state stadiums. The first public stadium in Brazil was built in São Paulo between 1938 and 1939, and was opened in 1940 by President Getúlio Vargas. The Pacaembu—inspired by the Olympiastadion, the arena built by Hitler for the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin—could accommodate up to seventy thousand fans.

FIFA created the World Cup in 1930, thus making transcontinental matches a regular feature of the sport. Brazil participated in the first three tournaments; the 1930 finals in Uruguay, the 1934 competition in Italy, and the 1938 event in France. Due to the Second World War, the FIFA tournament was suspended for twelve years and when it resumed for its fourth edition in 1950, Brazil won the right to be the host country.

One of the conditions imposed by Jules Rimet, president of FIFA at the time, was that the arenas match the grandeur of the event. This led to the construction of the Maracanã, built between 1948 and 1950 by Rio's city council. Five other Brazilian cities—Porto Alegre, Curitiba, São Paulo, Belo Horizonte, and Recife—provided pre-existing stadiums, mostly belonging to local clubs, with only ad hoc modifications made in preparation for the World Cup.

The Maracanã was an ambitious structure: it was the largest stadium in the world, with a capacity of 150,000 fans. It is known that during the 1950 tournament, attendance figures actually reached 200,000. Of this number, also according to official figures, some thirty thousand places were reserved for standing fans, whose affordable tickets left them exposed to the sun and rain and provided only a partial view of the playing field. These fans became rather symbolic of the anonymous football supporter, typical of the Brazilians who inhabit Rio's slums and the city's periphery. The oval-shaped Maracanã was divided into two levels and six internal subdivisions: on the first level, standing general admission, ordinary seating, and season ticket places; on the second level, premium seating, the grandstand, and bleachers (popular with fan groups). The media had a press box on the second level as well.

The Brazilian team delivered an outstanding performance in the 1950 World Cup, leading to high expectations among the nation's football fans; the country was therefore left in shock when the national squad fell to Uruguay in the final. Despite the surprise and disappointment, Brazilian fans remained well mannered, according to comments in newspaper accounts of the day.

The Maracanã became the standard for Brazilian stadiums, a source of pride for Brazilian fans as well as an international icon; it was considered democratic, and economically accessible to everyone, a space for all classes. Replicas appeared between 1965 and 1975 when the Brazilian military regime built about thirty sports centers in various cities around the country. In this way the popular characteristics of football became nationalized; Brazilian stadiums were physical spaces for fans from the urban masses to follow their teams.

Brazil hosted the South American Championship in 1919, 1922, and 1949—and again in 1989 when the competition had another name, Copa América. Ten teams took part in this cup, organized by CONMEBOL—Confederação Sul-Americana de Futebol (South American Football Confederation). No major work was done modernizing the stadiums in the four venue cities. The Brazilian hosts won the tournament, thanks to the brilliance of players like Romario and Bebeto.

Brazil has also hosted the Pan American Games on two occasions, in 1963 and in 2007. São Paulo was the venue for the 1963 games, which were played at club pitches and the city stadium, Pacaembu. A residential village was built to provide accommodation to the participating athletes, later to become housing for students at the University of São Paulo. The 2007 Pan American Games were held in Rio de Janeiro. The run-up witnessed a growing debate about the legacy that would be left by the event, such as parks, sporting centers, and stadiums. Brazil's arenas mostly date from the 1970s. The hosting of major international tournaments has regularly presented architectural challenges.

With the Maracanã having aged with time, the city of Rio embarked on the construction of a modern sports center, inspired by European arena architecture. It was built with four sectors to compartmentalize the bleachers. One of the design features of Estádio Municipal João Havelange (João Havelange Municipal Stadium), better known by its nickname, Engenhão, after the neighborhood of Engenho de Dentro, was the abolition of areas for standing fans. Engenhão proved to be a dubious bequest; unable to administer the stadium, the city leased it to Botafogo, a traditional city club. But, after structural errors were identified, it closed, without plans to re-open.

Maracanãzinho

For many years, Brazil sought to host the FIFA World Cup for a second time. Few countries have had such an opportunity—France (1938 and 1998), Mexico (1970 and 1986), Italy (1930 and 1990), and Germany (1974 and 2006). Brazil's triumph for a fifth World Cup title in 2002 strengthened its case for another chance.

However, it is clear that the sport was not the only factor influencing the decision. Choosing Brazil had a broader political and economic significance. Known in the

1980s for international debt, hyperinflation, and high rates of unemployment, Brazil in the first decade of the twenty-first century, despite its continuing and abysmal social disparities, gradually took a place on the world stage as a force in economics and international politics.

Brazilian diplomacy was a prominent feature of the presidency of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who took office in 2003. At times, in partnership with the United Nations, the international popularity of the Brazilian football team was used to ease problems in other countries. For example, in 2004, Haiti was on the verge of a civil war after a coup d'état overthrew President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The Brazilian team was dispatched to play a friendly on the Caribbean island; the presence of Ronaldinho and other Brazilian football idols on Haitian soil provided a welcome diversion and at least a temporary respite from the political tensions.

FIFA announced the selection of Brazil as the host country for the 2014 World Cup in 2007, the same year that the Pan American Games were held in Rio de Janeiro. Since then, Brazilian federal, state, and municipal authorities have regularly engaged with FIFA officials on an array of matters in interactions that have been tense on occasion. The various issues include hotel accommodation for fans and airport and ground transportation networks, but FIFA's guidelines for adequate stadiums have generated the most controversy.

A complicating factor was Brazil's desire, for political reasons, to spread the FIFA finals around the country's five regions, in twelve cities in all. The challenge varied from city to city. In some places, it was necessary to build an entirely new sports arena, since the existing ones did not meet the minimum conditions as required by FIFA. In other cities, club stadiums could be used, although with dramatic spatial transformations of interiors and exteriors.

Finally, there were the public stadiums such as the Maracanã, whose history and customs clashed with FIFA's international specifications. It would be an understatement to say that the Maracanã has undergone a makeover as the result of FIFA's rules; it has been virtually destroyed, and the re-opened stadium is vastly different from what had existed before in the same place. The change brings to mind the total destruction of Wembley, London's traditional stadium, built in 1923 to hold 120,000 fans. In 2003 Wembley was bulldozed to make way for a new footballing arena, which opened in 2007.

One of the notable changes is the dramatic reduction of the Maracanã's spectator area; initially, the refurbishment was meant to bring capacity down to 100,000 people, but the work reduced it to around fifty thousand, and with it came the loss of Maracanã's monumental character. One of the physical changes was the demolition of the stadium's roof, in violation of the code set forth by the Instituto Estadual do Patrimônio Cultural.

Another controversy swirled around the proposed removal from the sporting grounds of a school, an Olympic-size swimming pool, a track, and a basketball court: all spaces reserved for education, leisure, and the training of amateur athletes. In their place the modernizers sought to construct a large parking area and a shopping mall. The Rio state government eventually backed off the plan.

Finally, the high cost of the Maracanã project prompted headlines about whether the cost of hosting this sporting mega-event, paid for with the public funds, has been an investment or an expense. Sports managers and project organizers considered the public-private partnership model, known by the acronym PPP, as an ideal arrangement for bearing such costs. But the fact that the cost of refurbishing the Maracanã skyrocketed to $600 million, or three times the original estimates, certainly contributed to the discontent with the Brazilian government expressed in the countrywide street protests. Brazilians now refer to the storied Maracanã as Maracanãzinho, or "little Maracanã."

View from the Terraces

After a closure of thirty-two months, the Maracanã was reopened and the old regulars filled the new terraces on April 27 last year. The debut match was a friendly against England, and the new stadium then resumed its role as the venue for national league matches by the four big clubs in Rio de Janeiro: Botafogo, Flamengo, Fluminense and Vasco da Gama.

How do Brazilian fans like the "new" Maracanã? How do the organized supporters of Brazilian football clubs evaluate and understand the stadium's new physical structure and its impact on this passionate culture? Views are mixed. From August 1 to October 16 last year, we conducted a survey during twenty football matches of organized supporters of the four clubs—those who wore a shirt, hat, pants, or shorts with team emblems or were simply holding a flag or musical instrument. In this non-probabilistic sample, a total of 426 questionnaires posing sixty-six questions were collected in the Maracanã bleachers and in the São Januário stadium, the home ground of Vasco da Gama. The survey was conducted on the occasion of the Brazilian Championship and the Brazilian Cup, the two major professional nationwide tournaments, both organized by the CBF.

The survey was designed to measure information such as the organized fan's socio-demographic profile, and produce quantitative indicators to understand their relationship with football. The questionnaire also sought to understand the way in which fans showed support to their team, as well as to learn a little more about organized fans' habits and to assess the perception of these group about the Maracanã. It is these organized supporters who have been cited in media accounts as being responsible

for belligerent, unsporting behavior and violence in the stadiums—an unfortunate phenomenon that the new arena design is meant to discourage.

The survey revealed perhaps a surprising degree of approval for the new Maracanã, with 68 percent of the respondents declaring themselves satisfied with the post-refurbishment stadium. Only 8 percent of the survey participants spoke about the stadium's infrastructure for the World Cup in a negative way, referring to it as "bad" or "poor."

The positive assessment is greatly due to the stadium's apparent "modernization" in its adoption of the European arena model. For example, significant changes include new access ramps inside the stadium, the clean state of the corridors, the reconfiguration of bathrooms, the lighting, the new seats with backrests, the extensive amount of internal signage, and the availability of support staff who offer guidance both in and outside of the facilities.

The degree of satisfaction increased proportionally with the fan's age group: satisfaction was expressed by 65 percent of respondents up to 19 years of age; by 68 percent of respondents aged 20-39 years old; by 77 percent of respondents aged 40-49; and by 78 percent of respondents aged 50-59. The survey recorded similar figures—an overall 71 percent approval—in fan assessment of the Maracanã infrastructure for the World Cup; according to the perceptions of club fans in Rio, the Maracanã is good to go for the 2014 World Cup.

The Rio football fans, however, were much less satisfied when it came to the question of the new Maracanã's suitability for expressing collective support for their team; 66 percent of respondents said that the changes had undermined the ability of fans to become excited and demonstrate their enthusiasm. Fans complained about the architectural configuration of the stands, and the elimination of standing-only areas in favor of individual fixed-chair seating. Nineteen percent said they believed that the "party" aspect of the stadium experience would improve in the coming years; another 15 percent felt the new stadium design did not affect the party aspect. In general, respondents who complained about the stadium's capacity for facilitating collective forms of excitement and support for their team tended to be less satisfied with the new Maracanã as a whole.

Football's Future

Football has a popular appeal that can be seen in everyday life. Brazilians endlessly discuss the sport and the teams they follow. It is a mode of sociability that establishes a national ethos, but football is not the only cause for this consensus. Football indeed reflects the structure of contemporary conflicts present in Brazilian society. Hosting the World Cup is a special moment that allows us to view and explore such conflicts.

We live in a world of globalized football, in which the spectacle of the game has modified the function and nature of stadiums. If in the past sporting arenas were

required to accommodate the largest possible number of people, then in the television age, stadium size is not as crucial. The television spectator has become more important than the people who watch the sport within the stadium. Those among the working masses who personified the twentieth century spectator are no longer relevant in the ultra-modern stadiums of today. The 2014 World Cup has put this social phenomenon into focus in Brazil; its legacy will affect the future of the physical spaces around the country's playing fields. We are left with the question: In such a changing social environment, can Brazil continue to be represented as a footballing nation in the course of the twenty-first century?